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Subject: Sin Against the Holy Ghost.

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A Weekly Publication

OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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SIN AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST.

"Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speakest against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come."—MATT. xii. 31, 32.

There is very much anxiety and very little knowledge on this important subject. After a hopeless essay at understanding it, many persons give it up in confusion, and do not try to understand it. They think it is mysterious. It is neither mysterious nor obscure, in its true and inward meaning; that is, when the truth has once been brought out, it will be found to be a truth which belongs to the teaching of the whole Scripture, from beginning to end. It seems, at first sight, as if there were a general declaration that all sin, and all ordinary blasphemy, was to be forgiven, even when it was applied to the Son of God; but that there was a peculiar reason of sacredness why, in regard to the third person of the Trinity—the Holy Spirit—blasphemy was unforgivable; as if it assumed in that direction a malignancy of guiltiness; or, as if there were some prominent glory in the Holy Spirit which made it more culpable. Either of these ways of looking at it aggravates the difficulty, increases the number of questions to be asked, and carries us further from any true ground of solution.

The particular occasion on which this discourse was uttered, will show us the clue to its explanation. The twelfth chapter of Matthew gives in detail the account of what might be called our Master's conflict with his enemies—a conflict waged, not by controversy, but by his beneficent miracles. For instance, there was the controversy as to whether it was lawful for him to show mercy on the Sabbath day by healing; or, in other words, whether it was right for him to use the Sabbath day rationally, and for men's benefit, instead of using it as a yoke and a shackle.

Then came up the controversy about the man with the withered hand; and Jesus healed him on the spot. Every man who has a manly heart, whenever he sees any course that does real good to his fellow men, if he be rational, if he be just, if he be wholesome, will acknowl-

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edge at least the mercy and kindness; but the Pharisees, when they saw Christ heal this man, overthrowing them on every ground, were totally insensible to the kindness and mercy. They "went out and held a counsel against him, how they might destroy him," and "Jesus knew it," and "withdrew himself."

He was, in a second instance, brought into the presence of "one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb, and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw; and all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David? But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city, or house divided against itself shall not stand. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?"—and more to the same point. And then it is that he says, "Wherefore, I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, shall not be forgiven unto men."

The facts in these cases cannot be evaded. Here were God's works manifested both by the power required, and by its beneficence. These Scribes and Pharisees looked upon the disclosure without the slightest sympathy either with its mercy or with its divinity. They coolly said, "It is Beelzebub that helps him."

If that speech had been a passionate parry in a fierce debate, it would have been pardonable; but it indicated a deliberate state of mind, a degree of moral corruption, which turned things entirely about. It indicated that they had arrived at such a state of incurable perversion that when they looked upon moral goodness in a concrete form, illumined by the divine Spirit, they called it evil. They were hopeless. Their moral sense had become thoroughly disorganized, degraded, perverted, past cure.

With these facts before us, we begin to have an insight into what this passage means.

If the faculty or organ by which a man discerns good and evil has become so perverted that it fails in its proper uses; if a man's moral faculties are so perverted that the Holy Spirit, who is the source of inspiration, and who gives forth that light and stimulus by which the moral sense acts, is set aside and contemned; then that man's constitution is so corrupted that his moral judgment may be said to be gone. If under circumstances which bring upon a man's soul the full power of the Holy Spirit, cleansing the understanding, and giving life to the conscience, he resolutely and deliberately reviles God's truth and goodness, it is a fatal symptom. There can be no reaction

from such a condition. He has gone so far that, as a mere matter of fact, his case will assuredly prove fatal.

While this particular mode of presenting the truth makes this doctrine seem new and special, the real thing which the Lord aimed at is over and over again set forth in the Scriptures both of the Old Testament and of the New. It is, in short, the danger of a perversion of the moral sense, by which good shall become evil, and evil shall become good. In the passage which I read in the opening service this morning, from the 5th chapter of Isaiah, at the 20th verse, it is said, "Woe unto them that call evil good"—think it is so—"and good evil"—hate it as a great many men do; "that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"

This is precisely the same spirit of moral perversion by which the qualities of things are changed, and that which is base and undermining and soul-destroying is thought to be, and is pronounced to be, good; by which vices are justified, and called virtuous, and natural, and right; by which virtues are degraded, and called puritanic, and stigmatized by every name of reproach. Woe unto those that turn things end for end, so that that which ought to be dark, and is dark, shall be praised as light and beautiful and glorious!

"He that saith unto the wicked," declares inspiration in another place, "Thou art righteous, him shall the people curse. Nations shall abhor him."

"This," saith the Master, "is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light."

Again he saith, "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

If that judgment, that moral sense, by which you are to discern between good and evil, which is to be the eye of the soul, and guide it, is so perverted that the very light that is lit in your bosom becomes dark, how profound is that darkness! It is night without a morning.

The apostle Paul, in Romans, says, "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind."

This phraseology is more exactly in accordance with the psychological facts as they actually occur. As they did not like to retain God, in his enlightening, restraining, purifying influences, he let them alone, and "gave them over" to this perverted, "reprobate mind."

These are but single specimens, such as abound all the way through the Scripture. This very perversion of a man's inward moral sense, under circumstances in which it is stimulated and developed by the power of the Holy Spirit; this perversion of a man's moral sense under circumstances which shut him off from true beneficence, from

purity, from nobility, and ally him to things which are base and wicked, is one of the most dangerous, and, as I think it will appear in the sequel, one of the most common, of the tendencies which set in upon a man.

This comprehensive sin, then, which, as I shall show more in detail, is not a single act, but a state of mind, involves a real perversion of the ground and root of the moral nature in man, a perversion of the great facts in human conduct of good and evil, and the necessity of revolting from, and blaspheming, that divine Spirit — the Holy Ghost — which gives to the soul its light and its stimulus. When completed, this state sets a man at variance with his own nature, with the truths of a virtuous life, and with God, the author of spirit-life. And so, Christ declares that he who speaks against the Son — that is, the Son of his humiliation, walking as a man among men — opposing him hastily, blindly, may be forgiven; but that no man can oppose the Holy Ghost, that shines upon his own moral consciousness, thus deliberately going against his own inward moral convictions, and be forgiven. No man will who is recoverable. No man will until he has gone so far down that he is given over, it may be, to a "reprobate mind."

From this explanation we are prepared to go on with some more definite points.

1. This is not a sin which one can commit by accident, and without knowing it. I say this as an alleviation to multitudes of persons who are in great distress and torment. They are afraid they have committed the *unpardonable sin.* When, or how, they do not know. It is a vague impression in their mind, that there is some such sin; and they seem to think it is a special act. A man says, "It might have been some moment of outrageous anger, when I blasphemed everything above and below, that I committed the unpardonable sin." No, the unpardonable sin is not a single act, but a comprehensive state of mind. That is, a sin which applies to the whole condition to which a man has brought himself by repeated perversions, and in which you may say his moral condition is broken down.

No man ever becomes dissipated at once. No man, no matter what his experience may be, can become utterly dissipated in a week — and still less in a day or an hour. But a man can, by days, and weeks, and months, and years, become so dissipated as to have broken down his whole bodily constitution; as to have sapped and sucked dry the brain; as to have impaired every nerve; as to have overstrained every organ. Every part of a man's body may be utterly destroyed by dissipation.

Now, there is a dissipation of the soul which corresponds to the dissipation of the body. It comes on by the perversion of a man's reason; by the perversion of his moral sympathies; by the perversion of his choices; by the perversion of his judgment in respect to things

right and wrong. It is a gradually accumulating process. It is not a single act. It is the comprehensive result of a long series of various acts.

No man, then, need fear that he will stumble by accident into blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, in the sense in which the Saviour used the phrase. No man can come to it without a thousand warnings. No man can come to it without long-continued perversions in most familiar and easily recognized instances.

It is possible that a man may consummate this sin at a given point of time. It is possible that a man may, in a moment of high temptation, bring to its consummation a long course of moral degradation and perversion. There may be a time when, with outrageous and blasphemous anger, a man is "given over." But this is simply the closing of a long series of wickednesses. Ordinarily, we are not to suppose that this work of deterioration ever has its consummation in any single act.

2. No man need fear that he has committed the unpardonable sin who is deeply alarmed and anxious about it; for the very nature of that sin is moral insensibility. If a man has *sinned away his day of grace*, he is the last person in the world that is concerned about it. The sign that a man has so sinned is moral paralysis; and if one shows anxiety about his condition, that very anxiety indicates that he has not come to that state. I have known a great many persons, and have had scores of persons come to me, who, though their life was not marked with any other infirmities or sins than belong to men in common, were in great anxiety lest they had committed the unpardonable sin. Indeed, it is almost invariably the case in those types of insanity where what is called "religious melancholy" sets in, that the person thinks he has sinned away his day of grace, or committed the unpardonable sin, and is in great distress about it.

Old Dr. Champion, one of the predecessors of my father's pulpit in Litchfield, Conn., in the latter part of his ministry, thought he had sinned away the day of grace, and that he was going to hell; and he never showed himself so much a Christian as in the disposition which he manifested at that time. If it was God's will that he should go there, he was willing to go. He did not know what he should do in hell, till one day he solved the question satisfactorily in his own mind, and said, "I will open a prayer-meeting there!" He thought it would afford him some balm and consolation. I do not think that man ever got there. And yet, he was in a constant state of melancholy from the feeling that his day of grace had gone.

In respect to such cases, that you have probably met, and that I, in my particular vocation, am constantly meeting, let it be remembered that sensibility, anxiety, and a disposition to be better, are totally in-

consistent with the existence of the unpardonable sin, and that those persons that are given over to a reprobate mind, are persons who never care about it, or trouble themselves about it. Just as long as a man cares whether he goes to church, and whether he hears right preaching, and whether he is in a salvable state, or not, he has not gone through the whole course. He may be leading a life the tendency of which is to take out the tone and temper of his moral condition; but just as long as he has any kick-back in him; as long as he resists; as long as there is power in the truth to touch his nerve of sensibility, so long he is not of a reprobate mind. And where a person's whole nature is yet sensitive, and he walks in sorrow and sackcloth, it is preposterous, it is next to insanity, for him to suppose that he has committed the unpardonable sin. Every man commits many sins; we all of us sin perpetually; there is not a day in which we do not have occasion to ask God for pardon; but so long as our conscience is alive, we may be sure that we have not sinned away our day of grace.

3. Ordinary procrastination; ordinary irresolution; the putting aside of things right on account of the superior attraction of some worldly good—these things, although they are sinful and dangerous, are not the sins which our Saviour marked. There are many persons that commit sins by offending God, by grieving the Divine Spirit, who are not properly to be called blasphemers against the Holy Ghost, nor charged with having committed the unpardonable sin. For the state to which a man has come when these things are true respecting him, is such a perversion of his moral sense that good and bad have become interchanged therein. It is a perversion of his discerning faculty. It is that condition in which he thinks bad things are good, and that good things are bad. It is that condition which the conscience, as the eye, is in, when it sees double—when it sees distortedly—being organically changed.

4. Is this perversion frequent? Are men peculiarly liable to it? Is this sin one into which we are likely to fall? Men are not likely to fall into it suddenly—those at any rate, who are in Christian house holds, and are following Christian courses. It is not the special sin of persons who are walking in the ways of morality and virtue. But in a great city like this there are not a few who are specially in danger of just this sin,—namely, such a total perversion of the moral sense that they prefer lies to the truth, vice to virtue, and oppression to justice. They lose all accuracy of judgment. They lose all sense of the fitness of things. By their interest, by the influence of their companions, and by the long drill of their own mind, they are changed right about. No man that is just and true can meet them without feeling, at every point, that if they are right he is wrong, and that if they are wrong he

is right. They put darkness for light, and light for darkness. They call evil good, and good evil. They call bitter sweet, and sweet bitter. There are multitudes of such instances. We see them all around about us.

This perversion may be the result of physical dissipation, which sometimes not only corrupts the body, but works a shocking demoralization of every faculty of the soul. Such is not always the effect of physical dissipation; for I have known men who, though they had gone through every gradation of intemperance, and though they seemed very much perverted in mind, yet maintained their understanding with a tolerable degree of justice. They knew what was right, and admitted it; and they knew what was wrong, and confessed that. There are many shades of intemperance. There are kinds of intemperance which make men devils. There are kinds of intemperance which seem to be the destruction of the nervous system, and the physical system. And, though these kinds of intemperance degenerate, unquestionably, the mental and moral constitution, yet they do not produce this effect in any such eminent degree as it is produced in many cases. I have known men that were victims of intemperance, who still remained amiable and kind, and in a sense, very gentle; who had intervals, paroxysms, of conviction; and who, down to the end of their life, had moral stamina enough to strive against their bondage, and cry out, "When I would do good, evil is present with me."

I have also seen cases where everything went by the board; where everything that was fair and lovely was burned up; and where an absolute change was wrought, by which kindness became cruelty, and fineness became vulgarity, and the higher elements of the soul were overwhelmed by lava-like passions.

Where dissipation takes on these ruinous forms, unquestionably it will result in so degrading the mind, in so bringing it down, that the moral sense will become utterly perverted. There are not a few persons in the midst of vices—men that gamble, or men that live in debauchery—who have, far back inside of their being, shut and locked up, a little chapel, where they keep a conscience, and a memory of their childhood. There are sometimes very bad men in whom, if you could only steal into the chapel of their souls, and strike the bell there, you could rouse up a sensibility which would surprise their friends and them. But it is shut. It is kept locked up. Then there are other men whose dissipation seems to make a clean sweep, so that there is nothing left in them. It destroys the imagination; it destroys the affections; it destroys the whole moral sense. You may sound on every nerve, and along every chord, and there is no place left in them that has not been destroyed by dissipation.

Such persons *have* committed the unpardonable sin. That man has committed the unpardonable sin whose moral sense is so perverted that when he is brought into the presence of truth, and under the direct inshining of the Holy Ghost, there is nothing in him that responds to the truth, but something in him that acts against it. That perversion of a man's whole moral constitution which destroys the power of God over his soul is a sin against the Holy Ghost. And a great many men are in danger of falling into that terrible abyss. A great many men have gone into it who will never come out.

It is, however, by no means confined to this. There is a danger that overhangs moral men. Men determined to do wrong may gradually destroy in themselves all moral resistance; but there is many a man that does wrong, and knows it, who is not in so dangerous a condition as a man that does wrong, and does not believe that he does so. A man who sins with his eyes open, is a great deal more likely to find his way out of sin than the man who puts his eyes out in order to sin. A man that does wrong, and knows it is wrong; a man that says, "I know this is wrong, but I will do it;" a man who keeps his sense of God's law intact; a man who says, "I choose to ride over my conscience, but then, I *have* a conscience, and I do not intend to blur my eyes;" a man who says, "I am walking in wrong courses; but after all the ideal of right in me has not been destroyed"—such a man has resiliency left; and a time may come when temptation will remit, and when moral influences will augment; and then he may be saved. The vitality of his moral constitution, his sense of right and wrong, and his perception of God's authority and man's responsibility, which are preserved, are all of them what a physician would call the *stamina, the point of resiliency*, on which he may bound up again under favorable circumstances.

But to the man who goes along, and reasons about every step, and says, "What is there wrong in this?" and unbraids everything, and untwists it, and takes it to pieces—to him, finally, lying is not wrong. It is inexpedient, of course. "A man," he says, "should administer lying with prudence; but it is not wrong in itself." And of friendship he says, "You get along better with it; but then, it is a great deal better for a man not to be beholden to anybody; it is a great deal better for a man to be his own friend, and to cultivate just as much friendship among men as is profitable; but after all, it is all a vain show." So he disintegrates the ideal of generous friendship. Step by step he questions matters of fidelity, matters of taste, matters of eating and drinking. All forms of illicit pleasure, all courses of wickedness through which men go, dissipations of every name, he takes and throws into the alembic of a bad meditation, and dissolves them together, and at last says, "There is nothing in the world to keep me

from going this way, or that way, or the other way. I do not believe there is any God or any future. I shall be like the clod that the plow turns over. I shall rot on one side, and turn up, and grow on the other side. I do not believe in good or bad. I believe he is the best man who is like a needle which takes the longest thread through the smallest hole." Such a man is of a reprobate mind. Any man who puts out his inward sight so that he has not the power of forming moral judgments; any man who dissolves the substance of integrity in him; any man who destroys the very fiber and texture of that which make right and wrong in his mind — any such man is reprobate. There is nothing left in him to save. You cannot do anything with him. When God's grace shines full on a man, if there are landmarks in him — landmarks of early education; landmarks of affection; landmarks of conscience — if there are strong points in him that you can address the truth to, you may save him, though he has gone down never so deep. But when a man's corruption has destroyed the nature of his conscience, and obliterated in his mind all distinction between good and bad, or right and wrong, what is there that you can get hold of by which to change him?

Now, there are many persons whose wickedness is of that kind. Ah! that is not the wickedest man who is fullest of blood; who is most impetuous; whose quick temperament and vital constitution make everything sweet; who plunges headlong into this wickedness, and the next, and the next, and, because reflection is painful, will not reflect, but dashes on; who is open and bold in his wickedness. Men say of such an one, "Oh! what a shameless fellow he is! and how wicked he is!" But not less wicked, perhaps, are those who hoot and howl after him. Not less wicked are those *elegant* men, who think it is not *prudent* or *wise;* who laugh and leer, and say, "Fool! what did he do it for? He could have had all he wanted in the world; but then, he ought to have been *prudent.* Why, there is not a pleasure to be desired that I do not have; but I do not blow my trumpet. I take it clandestinely. If he would only practise a little more art, if he would only use a little more hypocrisy, he would have just as much, and it would be a great deal better for him. He will injure himself by going on in such a reckless way. He ought to be more quiet, and keep up appearances. The right way to live, is to eat, drink, and be merry, and get as much pleasure as you can, but to keep everything fair above board." Do not you see such men all through society — men of exquisite enamel, but rotten inside; men full of wise, cautionary maxims that touch the outside of life, but full of damnation in the heart; men filled with envies, and jealousies, and inordinate avarices, and selfishnesses most profound, and withering lusts, all of them carried nicely and snugly in life? They are reprobate. They have sinned against the Holy Ghost.

But even where men are not carried into that state by their lower nature — by their passions and appetites — they still may be carried into substantially the same state by another class of faculties. Where men, for instance, have subjected the whole truth of religion, and all its developments, to ridicule, to cynical observation, to sneering skepticism, until they have destroyed in themselves the very power of appreciating goodness, they have sinned against the Holy Ghost. I have the most profound sympathy for a man that is truly a doubter. The voice that cries out, "Oh! my God, where art Thou!" is the saddest voice in the world. If in the night you heard, from out of the woods on the edge of which you dwelt, the voice of one in trouble calling out in the stillness, would not you rise and go out after him, and succor him, and bring him into the road if he had lost it? And if there are any who are in trouble from having lost their faith, not wanting to be unbelievers, but longing to get on stronger ground, my whole heart's pity goes out for them. It was to seek and to save such that Jesus Christ was sent into the world; and he will surely rescue them if they are honest and true; if they follow the heart rather than the head; if they seek not philosophy, but life in the soul. But when skepticism is sneering; when it is malignant; when men make use of it to disbelieve everybody's goodness, and not to increase their conviction that they themselves ought to be good; when it undermines the faith of others; and when it would destroy the young with its blighting strokes of wit — then it is most cruel, and most awful.

To put the torch to a man's house is nothing; to burn up his household goods is but very little, even if he is poor without them; but to take away a man's faith, though it be erroneous, is to take away the most sacred thing that he can have. Do not take away from a man anything that he believes in, and that he leans on, till you can put in its place something that is better. To knock from under a man's feet that which he stands on, and to give him nothing else, is a wanton cruelty and wickedness which is hardly to be measured by any language. How many parents there are that sneer at their children's faith! How many old materialistic lawyers, how many skeptical doctors, how many men that have no faith in religion, there are, who, though they are good at heart, and have kind ways, use their tongue as a lancet, cutting right and left, and destroying men's beliefs, instead of pruning them to make them better! How many there are, the effect of whose life is to undermine moral beliefs; to undermine moral restraints; to undermine the faith which is the support of the soul!

Where a man has gone through a long life like this, it may very well be feared that he has sinned away the day of grace; that he is given over to a reprobate mind; that he has sinned against the Holy Ghost.

It is a very dangerous thing for a man to pervert his own moral sense —to pervert it so that there is in him no virtue, no truth, no piety; and then to pervert other people's moral sense as well. Such a course as that hardens and triple-hardens a man.

This may take place in even more ingenious and less suspected ways. A man may befog his conscience—and that is bad enough. A man may by a thousand little mean courses come to that which otherwise men come to by great leaps. I would rather have a man commit two or three great sins a year, and hold up all the rest of the time, than have him keep safely out of all great sins, and be forever nibbling on little, small, mean ways, that finally infix themselves upon his disposition.

If it is a thief, you must shut him out, or else you will lose all your linen and your clothes; but it is only once or twice a year that you need fear thieves. They are not apt to come into a man's house oftener than that; but they are one source of danger. Then there are moths. They come into your house; but with tolerable care you can keep them out. Then there is something finer yet—mildew and mould. These are great enemies. But there is something still worse, and that is bad washing, where you eat your clothes to pieces by caustics—where under the name of cleaning you rot the very fabric of your garments. You are in danger of having your clothes stolen once in a while by a big thief. Still more are you in danger of having them moth eaten, or destroyed by mildew and mould. And yet more are you in danger of having their very substance corroded by the process which you employ in washing them.

Now, a man is in danger of losing his moral stamina by great sins. They are very dangerous; but they do not come very often. The loss of business, the breaking up of friendships, and a thousand other things, act as breakwaters, and tend to restrain men from such dangers. But there are other dangers that come like moths; and still others that come like mildew and mould; and others still that come in the guise of domestic cleansings, and destroy the fiber of the man.

Here is a man that you could not get to steal. He has a very great prejudice against jails, and he is not going to commit theft. And yet, there are a thousand ways in which a man, without stealing, can rasp off the corners of other men's interests. And there is many a man who is all the time hanging on the edge of men's necessities, and acting like a thief without a thief's boldness; pursuing little mean ways that are perpetually making himself better off than his fellow men. He is a universal absorbent of everybody that he touches. He goes around never doing anything very large or very right, but in every direction pursuing such little mean, wicked courses that the very substance of

his nature is disintegrated and destroyed by these erosions. By this minute, constant and continued tampering with his moral sense, he at last comes to that state in which the light of the glory of God, when it shines upon him, produces no more effect than the morning sun, shining upon the face of a corpse that lies in the east window.

When men lie dead in the house, the morning bell calls them not. They do not hear the children on the stairs. Their ears are deaf to the sweet sounds of birds out of doors. The beauty dispersed all abroad their eyes do not behold. And I see men whose moral sense is so dead that it is never touched by all the mercies of God above, nor by all the mercies of God distributed among men below. They are eaten up and destroyed utterly.

A man may come to the same state by a sort of egotism by which he puts himself in the place of God. When a man's vanity and self-conceit is so inordinate that he becomes everything to himself—that he becomes the universe to himself; that he becomes a deity to himself; that he becomes a supreme government to himself; that he makes a hideous idol of himself, and worships himself—then he has come to this state. "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him." "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!" It is the idolatry of egotism.

Of all God's gifts, there is none of such value as the moral sense, and there is none that we are so little likely to take care of, and to keep clear and sensitive, and divinely bright. The moral sense is the greatest treasure we have. I hear men thank God that he gave them such a reason. Reason is a stately and noble gift, surely; but conscience is better than reason. I hear men congratulating their fellows that God gave them genius. They are poets. They are orators. They are artists. They carve the stone. They depict in colors the various forms of life. And this, surely, is a munificent gift from the hand of God. But no genius is comparable to the sense of that which is right and wrong. Genius of conscience is the best genius that a man can have. I hear men thank God that they have warm affections; and it is a subject of thanksgiving; but, after all, that divinely enlightened eye by which a man can see things true in the heaven above and on the earth beneath, is far better. There is nothing that God ever gives to a man like a clear-eyed, wholesome, sensitive, prophetic, magisterial conscience, which shows him the path, even where men's feet have not walked, interpreting what is right and what is wrong, making him sensitive to all these things, and keeping him on the side of whatever is good, and just, and true, and pure, and of good report, among men or angels. But, though this is the greatest gift that God ever makes, it is the one that men are most

careless about. You may destroy almost everything else in a man; but so long as you keep that in him, you have in him the root of manhood. You may destroy that, and keep everything else, and the man will be utterly undone. Christ called it *the eye.* "The light of the body is the eye. If, therefore, the eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" No disaster can befal a man so great as the perversion and destruction of the eye of his soul.

A man may cut away every mast on his ship, and yet pursue his voyage. A man may have everything on deck carried overboard, and yet make some headway. A man in the middle of the ocean can afford to lose everything else better than he can afford to lose the compass in the binnacle. When that is gone he has nothing to steer by. That little instrument is his best friend. It is his guide. And that conscience which God has given you is your compass and guide. You can afford to lose genius, and taste, and reason, and judgment, better than that. Keep that as the apple of your eye. Keep it clear, and strong, and discerning. Be in love with your conscience; and let your conscience be in love with God. A conscience held in love, is the very foundation not only of a spiritual manhood, but of happiness in an earthly manhood.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

Oh Lord our God, it is to thine infinite mercy and thine infinite goodness that we address ourselves. If thou wert to measure us as thou dost those who have kept their first estate in heaven—the spirits that dwell with thee—who of us could claim to approach thee or know thy fellowship. So far are we from knowledge, so far from conformity, so far from the spirit of the divine, who of us could venture to draw near to thy presence at all? Who of us could come boldly? Who of us would dare to call thee Father? And yet, thou hast put these most endearing words into our lips. For thou hast sent thy Son to say to us that henceforth we are not servants, but *friends*. Art thou then, our Friend, O Lord our God? And may we stand as friend with friend by thy side? And may we know all that thou dost? Thou hast taught us in lifting our heart heavenward to say *Our Father*. Art thou then, O gracious and all-loving, our Father? And are we as dear to thee as our children are to us? And wilt thou do for us what we would be willing a thousand times to do for our children? Thou dost reply to us, saying, If ye being evil, know how to give good things to your children, how much more your Father which is in heaven! And in this comfortable assurance, in this joyful trust of thy goodness, we have from day to day drawn near to thee; we have asked; we have reasoned; we have been guarded from evil; we have been upheld in good; we have seen dangers that drew near like night dispelled as by the morning. We have seen evils that shot over our heads, surcharged with bolts, driven away as winds drive the storm. We have seen our weakness strengthened, our sickness healed, our anxiety alleviated, and our darkness filled full of stars. Thou hast drawn near to us in our solitude. Thou hast been a better companion to us than those most beloved. Thou hast not only given us the light that is in this natural world, but shined into our heart by the Holy Spirit, and given us the light which shines from Christ Jesus. We have felt our lives made abundant and joyful, and in many respects victorious by thy grace. By the grace of God we are what we are. It is thy hand of love that has moulded us. And though sometimes thou hast in moulding so put forth thy strength that we called it sorrow, yet it has been love. Thy smitings and thy chastisements have been love. Our very wounds—thou hast made them by love to us. Thou hast touched us again, and healed us, and made us strong. And in all thy dealings with us, thou hast mingled mercy and severity. Thou hast shown thyself like a father unto us. We mourn that we should have grieved thee as we have. We mourn that we should have been as inconstant as we have been in goodness. We mourn that our strength should have lain so far down toward the material world on which we stand; and that in things spiritual, where holy aspirations dwell, we have been so feeble and so inconstant. Our day has been long in things natural, and short in things spiritual. O Lord, we make confession of our unworthiness, of our great weakness, of our infirmities; but chiefly of our sins, which are more than we can number. And yet thou art He that doth forgive. Thou dost teach us how to overcome evil. Thou art awaking in us a holy horror of it. Thou art making us love the things that are right because they are right, and bringing us into sweet agreement with all the ways of duty. Harmonious are they to our better thought. This is thy teaching. Be pleased, then, though we be slow and inconstant, and even disobedient, though we are infirm and weak, and even fractious, and sinful—be pleased All-loving Father, still to guide and still to instruct us. May we learn to possess our spirits in due humility before God. May we evermore be lowly and humble. Help us to carry ourselves among men in all charity and in true love. May we not be afraid of that which is right. May we fear only that which is wrong. And grant that all our life long we may feel that this is not the real life, but the shadow; that our substantial home is not that which man's hand can build, nor time pull down. May we feel that our home is in the unseen world—in that city of God—in that house not made with hands. Thou art making it near to us. Thou art sending there so many messengers—so many that we have learned to love upon earth, that are now looking out upon us, and that we find them with our loving and searching thoughts—that heaven is indeed becoming populous to our realization. There are our little ones; there are our

parents; there are our brothers and sisters; there are our fondest companions. They have slept to earth, and are awakened to immortality; and they are as the angels of God. Every day we are drawing nearer to them; and every day our souls hear somewhat that it is not lawful for our bodies to understand. Every day we hear them crying out to us "Come, come." We are coming. By sickness, by pain, we are sped. By sorrows and by growing years we are sped. By troubles, which are called men's misfortunes, but which are God's winds sent to convey us, we are coming—coming to the General Assembly and Church of the first born; coming to the spirits of just men made perfect. We are forsaking the treasure of life. We are forsaking its languishing affections. We are forsaking the partial, and the little, and the low. We are reaching out toward the perfect, the joyful, the pure, the infinite and the eternal. O Lord our God! grant that we may not be sorry that life is spending itself. Grant that we may look forward to that other and better life with growing desire and yearning from day to day.

And now, may we make sure that we have thy friendship, and that our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. And then may we welcome what Providence so far hath been pleased to send. Thou canst not make us poor who have heaven. Thou canst not make us sorrowful whose is all the assembly of the blessed. Thou canst not make us afraid—thou that dost love us, and hast redeemed us by thine own precious blood. Thy will be done. And so we shall have peace, and joy.

Bless we beseech of thee all that worship to-day, of every name; all thy servants who speak the truth, to a better discerning of the truth everywhere, and to a more earnest and heart-felt expression of it. And may thy truth have new power given to it from year to year. Give it authority to meet and overcome all lies, and all untruths of every grade spoken of men, or wrought into the texture of life May there be a power in the truth of God to overcome all iniquity and every evil. Fulfill the promises which respect the earth. Bring in Jew and Gentile, and the fulness of the earth as the fulness of the sea.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son and Spirit. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our heavenly Father we beseech of thee that thou wilt add to the truth which we have spoken thy spirit, by which it shall take hold upon the thought, upon the conscience, upon the understanding of every one. Make us honest with ourselves, and honest with thee. May thy spirit of all light shine into us. May we put between us and thee no veils and no hindrances. May our conscience be clear to thy shining, and true to those impressions which thou dost give us. May our lives follow our consciences so that at last when life shall be over, and we shall be ready to go out of school, it shall be well taught and well bred, and prepared for the higher school of better knowledge in thine immediate presence; where we will praise the Father, the Son and the Spirit, forevermore. *Amen.*

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THIS Establishment is designed to supply every want connected with the use of Sewing-Machines.

Machines of all the approved makes are kept on hand, or furnished to order. They are sold at the Manufacturer's prices, with all their guarantees. Purchasers have here the advantage of seeing and testing all kinds together, and are thereby enabled to choose the Machine best adapted to their wants. They have also the privilege, if not suited in their first choice, of exchanging for any other kind. Full instructions are given gratuitously.

Machines are also Rented by the Day, Week, or Month, either with or without the privilege of purchasing, which gives an opportunity to test them thoroughly before buying.

We also deal in SECOND-HAND Machines—Buying, Selling, Exchanging, etc. Old Machines are Cleaned, Adjusted, and Modernized, and supplied with all the Tools, Fixtures and Attachments required in their use. Needles, Thread, Oil, Soap, etc., of the best quality, are kept constantly on hand, and sold at the lowest prices.

Operators, with or without Machines, are sent into Families; and Machine Stitching of all kinds is done at the EMPORIUM.

The establishment is complete in its arrangements, and possesses, under the new management, superior facilities for conducting the business. Every effort will be made to please those who favor us with their patronage.

In dealing with this establishment you have *this advantage:*

YOU CAN

EXCHANGE

FOR ANY OTHER MAKE

If your first choice should prove

NOT SATISFACTORY.

Machines sent to all parts of the country, and guaranteed to suit.

Full information as to prices, terms, etc., given to all who send address, stating the kind of work they wish to do.